

Longer Poems of the Nineteenth Century

First Series. 1800 - 1850

SELECTED
AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
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PREFATORY NOTE

I have tried to make the following selection fully representative, within the limit of about 2500 lines imposed by the conditions of teaching, of the more sustained poetic efforts of the first half of the nineteenth century in England. The usual poems chosen to represent this period are either *Michael* or *The Excursion*, *Book I*, *Adonais*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Mazeppa's Ride* or *The Prisoner of Chillon*, so far as the Romantics are concerned. I am aware that Wordsworth's *Ode* is even nearer the hackneyed state than *Michael*, and that everyone knows *Childe Harold*, IV; however, it is my hope to have set them amid new surroundings. *Lamia* and *The Sensitive Plant*, thus permitting of resemblances being felt between the four leaders of the Romantic Age. As for Tennyson, any selection of his must seem hackneyed, and *The Lotos-Eaters* most of all; however, if his work on classical subjects before 1850 must be represented, the choice lies between *Enone* and *The Lotos-Eaters*, and I at least have no doubt of my preference. To represent the young Browning I should have preferred to give a passage from *Paracelsus* in which Aprile expresses a part of the poet,

but it seemed better to give sections complete in themselves from *Pippa* than an excerpt, however good, from another long poem which could scarcely be said to stand by itself.

My hope is that the set of selections may give some freshness to the study of the period represented and that the choice will be really felt to represent the best of the period's poetic output.

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INTRODUCTION

By "longer" poems are meant such as are longer than the average lyrical effort, but not so long as an epic or, generally, as even one book of an English epic. It is used here as an elastic term to designate poems of between 200 and 800 or so lines, and as Mr. Charles Williams has said, the right term would be "longish".

Poems of this length have the advantage over lyrics that they convey more of a poet's mind, poem for poem, and that they may combine lyrical and narrative qualities, which even lyrics of the ballad type do only piecemeal. Over long poems they have the obvious advantage that several "longer" poems by various poets can be read in the same time as one long poem, and thus historical and comparative studies of the whole group of poems can be pursued along with æsthetic or ethical studies of the poems in particular.

The nineteenth century possesses so great a wealth of longer poems of the first water suitable for general reading that, for handiness of use, it seems better to break the century into halves and select a series from each half. And this arrangement happens to suit very well with the course of English Literature through the century, for the first fifty years belong to the Romantics

and the second half to the Victorians. This last statement is true despite the fact that only one of the greater Romantics, Wordsworth, lived to see 1850, and that the rest were all dead by 1832, for the earlier work of Tennyson and Browning, till they found themselves round about 1850, is work done mainly in the studios of the Romantics and under their direct tutelage.

With the greater Romantics the longer poem fulfilled either of two main purposes: it dealt with politics, or it stated poetic experiences and discussed their meta-physical or ethical relations. Of the former kind are most of Shelley's more extended poetic efforts—*The Triumph of Life* being a good example—and, in the picture it gives of social conditions in England during the war with the French Republic, Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book I; Byron's *Vision of Judgment* belong to the type, while his *Childe Harold*, Canto III, also skirts the political field in parts, though the reflective power is lacking. Of the latter kind examples are much more numerous: Wordsworth leads in extent and profundity with his *Prelude*, Shelley contributes a characteristic piece with his *Alastor*, Byron is always characterizing himself under various aliases with their dark adventures; finally, Keats, in all his longer work save perhaps *The Eve of St. Agnes*, pursues to a poetic solution problem after problem that vexed his poetic life.

From 1824 onwards we hear little or nothing of politics from the major poets. Mainly this was because the younger group of Romantics was dead—Keats in 1821, Shelley in 1822, and Byron in 1824—and the elder group quiescent, Coleridge with but a few years of his unfulfilled life to run, and Wordsworth retired from public life. But much more the silence was due to

the politics, which were hot enough, being concerned with home affairs, which never raise that excitement in poetic breasts that is stirred by foreign war or tyranny. Hence, the longer poems from 1824 to 1850 concern themselves with subjects drawn from the poet's inner life, and continue the Romantic tradition illustrated above by *Alastor* and *Endymion*. Browning's *Pauline*, his first publication, is strongly under the influence of Shelley's poem, and even when he frees himself from his master and becomes more himself, still it is the struggles within the poet's mind which occupy exclusively his pen—*Paracelsus* illustrates the strife between Knowledge and Love, *Sordello* that between Imagination and Reality. Then, from 1840, he begins to dramatize conflicts, no longer poetic ones, and so finds his true poetic task, to enter into the souls of men and women and reveal in action the forces which shape their individual destinies. Tennyson, his peer, influenced partly by a classical and more regular education, attends, at first, rather to the form than the matter of what he sings: he is learning the enchanting new tunes which the Romantics have given to English from their own invention or their Elizabethan studies. As he masters them and grows, Tennyson also converts soul-experiences of his own into verse, and so we have *The Palace of Art*, *The Two Voices*, and *The Vision of Sin*, beside the great number of experiments in matter from Greek legend and English life of the time which reveal the inspiration of his education or of Wordsworth.

The whole body of the work in "longer" verse of 1800 to 1850, whether of the Romantics or of the young Victorians, manifests a unity of character which makes

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it possible to regard the work of the major poets of this time as a single whole. It is, on the whole, after 1850 that the two great Victorians already named create bodies of literature with characteristics markedly different from the earlier Romantic and that new voices join the poetic chorus, adding notes to the general harmony which sound new though they may have still a Romantic timbre.

WORDSWORTH

The *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, according to the full title first given in the edition of 1815, was begun in 1803 and added to at intervals, being finished in 1806 after much revision and polishing. "Two years at least," says the poet himself in a note, "passed between the writing of the four stanzas and the remaining part," and it is clear from a reading of the poem that, after a vigorous but futile direct attack on his melancholy in the first four stanzas, the poet retires in the fifth upon a prepared philosophical position from which he feels he can make a better attempt to regain his lost confidence in the meaning of his own life. The Platonic suggestion of Anamnesis, a slow and gradual recollection of pre-existence induced by experiences in this life, is used by Wordsworth to illuminate the obscurity which has befallen the poet. It does not, however, quite fit his case, which is rather the reverse of that conceived by Plato. Plato conceives of man as coming into the world with a mind darkened by birth and progressively enlightened as life proceeds, by its experiences to unravel the truths with which pre-existence had endowed the soul; man,

therefore, is returning towards the light as he grows older and progresses in philosophy.

Wordsworth's experience of life, which the poem is meant to probe into and explain, has been rather the reverse. In childhood, he felt, the truths of Nature and the universe had been laid open to him and intuitively understood or rather absorbed. As childhood passed into youth and youth into manhood, however, the inner light within him had faded, until now he feels, in early middle life, bereft of the vision whereby he directed his steps. What has happened to him? It is not in Wordsworth to see that some act of his own, some weakness such as Browning hinted at later, some abandonment of early political hopes and ideals in the 1790's, when he was a red-hot Girondin, or of the first woman he loved, some corresponding sinking back into an easy conservatism and domesticity may have something to do with the loss of vision. Wordsworth is too sure of himself for doubts of the kind to find any harbourage in him. The failing must be due to natural causes and be universal to mankind.

Hence Wordsworth takes the Platonic notion, which supposes an intuitive vision to be inherent in mankind in the way Wordsworth believed, and turns it to account. The course of affairs must, however, be reversed. Now, to suit Wordsworth's own experience, the inward light must be strongest in infancy and gradually fade away as life advances, instead of increasing as with Plato. The employment of the strange theory is productive of some of the most haunting poetry in our language, for it gives Wordsworth the finest opportunity he ever had to express himself on the central facts of

his observation and experience, viz. the peculiar consonance between the life of Nature and his own spiritual life, the happiness he felt in the presence of Nature which close relations with Man's affairs seemed to take away, the existence of fragmentary and fleeting glimpses into this life of the universe which were still vouchsafed to him, and the need of combining the truth of Nature seen in those glimpses with the saddening truths of his vision of mankind. He is able, finally, in Stanzas X and XI, to restore a more permanent harmony within himself, to flatter himself that his new philosophical view enables him "to live beneath" Nature's "more habitual sway" and to combine his new sense of human suffering with his old sense of natural perfection in those closing four lines so supremely lovely and so seldom taken together.

BYRON

It was an English custom, even in mediæval times, and fully established in the Renascence, for young men of good family to make what was called the "Grand Tour" through France to Italy, returning by way of the Rhine and Holland, with the object of absorbing what was best of the culture of the Mediterranean and of the North. At least, this was the object proposed by the elders who sent them and supplied the means of travel; how the months and often years of travel were actually used may be seen in Elizabethan satire and comedy. What a young courtier and statesman should have seen and studied on the Grand Tour is laid down best by Bacon in his essay "Of Travel": what a more literary-minded person might do on the

same occasion may be followed in Milton's journey to Italy some years after Bacon's death.

Byron, therefore, was following a long-established custom with young men of his rank when he first set off in 1809 on those foreign travels which were to have *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* for their chief literary fruit. In that first journey to Spain, Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor he was running a course half-way between Bacon and Milton; for while, on the one hand, he was visiting many places of real import to the life and politics of the time such as Bacon would have recommended, he was, on the other, including places of purely literary associations in consonance with the Miltonic tradition. When *Childe Harold*, Cantos I and II, came out in 1812 and made Byron famous in a night, it could be seen that this "diary of travel", which Bacon would so strongly have approved of in theory, flouted all sage and statesmanlike theories of the good of travel in order to exploit the personality of the traveller. "Travel, in the younger sort," said Bacon, "is a part of education; in the elder, a part of experience." Byron, however, turned all that upside down by making travel a part of experience in the younger sort, and that not an experience to fit him individually for practical life in court or camp, but an universal experience in all cultivated and enthusiastic souls of the ancient glories and contemporary wonders of Mediterranean lands. Into this was fitted, almost adventitiously, the figure of an experiencer, *Childe Harold*, whose artistic morbidity fascinated the taste of the Regency and endowed, more than any other single character in fiction, the word "romantic" with its literary associations.

Canto III, following Byron's journey of 1816, made

new romance of the night before Waterloo and entirely refurbished the old romance of the Rhine and Switzerland, but it was Canto IV, wherein he found himself back on classical ground, this time of Italy, that crowned as well as completed the work. Here one passes from the dying glories of Venice to Arqua and its associations with Petrarch, to Ferrara and Tasso, to Florence with its galleries and Santa Croce. Thence a diversion to history with Lake Thrasimene and to Nature with Clitumnus and the falls of Terni before we are led to the Eternal City, to remain among its ruins for some one hundred stanzas, alternately contemplating beauty, glory, and their destruction, and reflecting upon an equal glory and ruin in the breast of the hero.

The reflections have here been omitted because they are the least strong part of a whole too long for complete presentation, not because they are the least interesting, for they are as much the fount and origin of that kind of psychological diary as the stanzas given are the model on which all later romantic travel diaries have fashioned themselves.

SHELLEY

The Sensitive Plant was written during Shelley's residence in Pisa in 1820, the exact time being given variously as the spring and the winter of that year. The immediate inspiration is said to have come from "the flowers which crowded Mrs. Shelley's drawing-room, and exhaled their sweetness to the temperate Italian sunlight". The garden depicted in the poem is supposed to have its original in one near Oxford which the poet and his friend Hogg once came upon unexpectedly. Finally, as regards "originals", the "Lady"

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of the poem is believed to have been modelled somewhat upon a Lady Mountcashell, then resident in Pisa.

But Shelley is pre-eminently the poet to transfuse earthly matter with a light not its own but borrowed from his own very unearthly spirit. None has announced better than he the alchemy whereby, from watching all day "the yellow bees in the ivy bloom", the poet, not really heeding or seeing these material objects, can create of them "forms more real than living man, Nurslings of immortality".

The poem, in fact, while apparently entirely taken up with description of a garden's growth and decay and of the care taken of it by an ill-fated lady (who, in any terrestrial garden, would surely have left all that to the gardeners), is really preoccupied with the problem of telling two other things at the same time, an allegory and a personal history. The allegory concerns the world at large, the metaphysical world of good and evil forces, of Love and Beauty; the personal history is a part of Shelley's, figured in the life of the Sensitive Plant itself which "loves, even like Love" and "desires what it has not, the beautiful!" Over the whole poem is cast the shadow of defeat and death which always lay upon Shelley in his later years whenever he contemplated the ways of this world wherein he had striven with passionate ardour, if not always with well-chosen means, for a millennium of peace and love and brotherhood.

KEATS

Written in the summer of 1819, *Lamia* as a story was found by Keats in that seventeenth-century storehouse of curious learning, the *Anatomy of Melancholy* of

Robert Burton, from which the poet himself gives the following extract as his source:

“ Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like ‘Tantalus’ gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.”

Keats had no schooling to speak of, and learnt his art by his own study of the English poets. He had already published two long poems whose form and manner pointed directly back to great poetic masters of the Renaissance: *Endymion*, which was written under

the influence of Spenser, and *Hyperion*, written under that of Milton. Each bore strongly the marks of its literary ancestry, *Endymion* being sweet and diffuse, *Hyperion* stately and splendid. Keats now went to school to Dryden, whose manner of telling stories compactly and connectedly in the *Fables* had attracted Keats and seemed to promise him what he most lacked, the ability to tell a story well and in comparatively plain English. Hence, *Lamia* is written in Dryden's heroic couplets, with occasional triplets and Alexandrines interspersed, also in Dryden's manner.

The subject matter of these three great poems is of far deeper importance than their technical experimentation, for Keats is the Romantic who most persistently watched his own mental and spiritual growth and whose poems are generally milestones along that road of inward development. *Endymion* is the record of Keats's yearning after ideal beauty and his discovery that the ideal can only be approached and won through the real. *Hyperion* faces the truth that not elemental energy and beauty but that energy and beauty cultivated and purified by knowledge must be the paramount power in life.

Lamia represents the war which the poet felt most keenly inside himself, that between passion and reason. Keats had a love for beauty that was the main urge of his genius but which at the same time threatened its stability. His spirit lived by the love which beauty awakened in him, yet he knew that a higher control must dominate or his powers would degenerate. The struggle to control what was dearest to him was extremely painful: reason seemed to destroy the very being of beauty, yet he knew that by reason he must attain to

some higher stage of development where, he hoped, Beauty would not mean less but more, and where his passion for it would be entirely healthful. *Lamia* is the record of this difficult and painful fight, and the tragic end of the poem, while following strictly the ancient story, depicts the loss which Keats felt he must suffer for the attainment he sought.

TENNYSON

The most Victorian poet learnt most from his Romantic predecessors in the art, and it is a study of the early poems of Tennyson, up to and including the 1842 volume, that demonstrates how much he owed to these poetic forbears.

The Palace of Art was published first in the volume of 1833 called *The Lady of Shalott, and other Poems*; it appeared again, much revised, in the 1842 volume and is one of the most polished efforts of the young Tennyson. In a prefatory poem he explained the allegory to be that of "A sinful soul possessed of many gifts, . . . That did love Beauty only . . . and Knowledge for its beauty, seeing not That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are three sisters

"That dote upon each other, friends to man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sunder'd without tears.
And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
Howling in outer darkness."

The theme, then, is much that of *Endymion*, but it has been moralized and is no longer so natural a growth of the poet's own experience. The execution is carefu

and exquisite, a determined painting of Nature, through scenes viewed on the poet's recent travels on the Continent, and of Art (though he found sculpture so resistant to direct description that he cut out his attempt at the figures of Elijah and Olympias), while even the new science of a century ago is made to serve for illustration. The tendency of the poet to artifice is felt most in his hyphenated adjectives—of which there are in this poem some fifteen entirely new to English—a type of poetic compound much loved by Homer and by Keats.

The Lotos-Eaters is a brilliant expansion of a passage of some thirty lines in Book IX of Homer's *Odyssey*, where Ulysses describes to King Alcinous that part of his voyage when he came to the land of the Lotos-Eaters and sent three of his men inland to find out the disposition of the inhabitants:

"Nor did the Lotus-eaters devise for my comrades destruction;
Nothing they did save only they gave them to eat of the lotus.
Now whoever did eat of the fruit honey-sweet of the lotus
Felt no longer the wish to return nor tidings to carry,
Caring for nought but to stay with the Lotus-eaters for ever,
Feeding on lotus, forgetting his home and the land of his
fathers."—(Cotterill's translation.)

The three companions succumb to the temptation of eating the lotus-fruit and have to be dragged weeping to Ulysses's ships and carried off. The descriptive work of Tennyson's poem has borrowed much from Greek idyllic poets, from Spenser and his follower Thomson, and is a triumph, not of artistic invention, but of artistic seizure of atmosphere and imitation of phenomena of sound and sight in language.

BROWNING

On a certain day in 1839 Browning, then young and unknown as a poet, was walking in Dulwich wood, meditating a reshaping of *Sordello*, an over-compressed and complicated poem on the growth of a poet's soul, when "the image flashed upon him of one walking thus alone through life, one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it, and the image shaped itself into the little silk-winder of Asolo, Felippa or Pippa." The poem, whose origin is so described by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, appeared in 1841 as the first of eight poetical productions, mainly dramatic, which in 1846 were republished together in one volume and called *Bells and Pomegranates*, a name taken from details of the Jewish high priest's robes and meaning music and food or sensuous harmony and intellectual substance, such as Browning conceived his poetry to be.

Pippa Passes represents how a girl of the silk-mills in Asolo altered the lives of four groups of persons in the town as she passed on her way singing and enjoying her one day's holiday in the year. The four groups illustrate, respectively, four kinds of love—the sensual, the marital, the maternal and filial, and the divine—and Pippa's song catches each group in turn at a crisis of its love-experience, when a move in one direction would mean soul-destruction. Pippa's song ensures the opposite fate for them all, and we are shown, in three interludes, how a plot laid against her own honour and safety is foiled by her unconscious influence on the last of the groups, which includes an unknown uncle of hers.

This idyllic drama, not arranged for the stage, is Browning's first recognition of the dramatic nature of his poetic genius. His interest always lay in the "incidents in the development of a soul—little else being worth study", as he said, but hitherto he had tried to express his interest in a lyrical or narrative or semi-dramatic form. In the next few years he will essay the full stage-play and fail, to return to a form of dramatic monologue which he makes his characteristic form of utterance.

Pippa is also the first definite expression of Browning's well-known optimism, not only through the formula "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world"—but more through the fates of the actors in the drama, especially of Pippa herself, which some critics condemn as pure melodrama, insufficiently motivated and highly unlikely. However it be, such was the natural mental expression of the vigour and robustness of Browning's mind, notably a contrast to Tennyson's, whose cry is usually: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief".

We look first to a poet, however, for poetry, and the Introduction and Conclusion of *Pippa* are given as specimens of what the relatively young Browning can accomplish in this way. Here is direct vision of Nature, direct description of that vision without imitation or blending of other poets' phrases; here is character-drawing by the method of self-expression; here is pure poetry and also humour of a kind. Above all, one feels oneself in the presence of a strong mind that loves beauty and is inexhaustibly curious about mankind.

Wordsworth

ODE

ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM
RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight

To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore;—

Turn wheresoe'er I may,

By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more

II

The rainbow comes and goes,

10

And lovely is the rose;

The moon doth with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare;

Waters on a starry night
 Are beautiful and fair;
 The sunshine is a glorious birth;
 But yet I know, where'er I go,
 That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound 20
 As to the tabor's sound,
 To me alone there came a thought of grief:
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
 And I again am strong.
 The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
 I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
 The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
 And all the earth is gay;
 Land and sea 30
 Give themselves up to jollity,
 And with the heart of May
 Doth every beast keep holiday;—
 Thou child of joy
 Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
 shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
 Ye to each other make; I see
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
 My heart is at your festival,
 My head hath its coronal, 40
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
 O evil day! if I were sullen
 While Earth herself is adorning
 'This sweet May morning,
 And the children are pulling
 On every side
 In a thousand valleys far and wide
 Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm.
 And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear! 50
 —But there 's a tree, of many, one,
 A single field which I have looked upon,
 Both of them speak of something that is gone:
 The pansy at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat:
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,

NINETEENTH CENTURY POEMS

Hath had elsewhere its setting
 And cometh from afar; 60
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home;
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy,
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy; 70
 The youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
 At length the man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.

VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
 And, even with something of a mother's mind
 And no unworthy aim, 80
 The homely nurse doth all she can
 To make her foster-child, her inmate, Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

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VII

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
 A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
 With light upon him from his father's eyes!
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart, 90
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,
 Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart,
 And unto this he frames his song:
 Then will he fit his tongue
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside, 100
 And with new joy and pride
 The little actor cons another part;
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
 That life brings with her in her equipage;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy soul's immensity;

Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep 110
 Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
 Haunted for ever by the eternal Mind,—

Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!

On whom those truths do rest
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
 Thou, over whom thy immortality
 Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
 A presence which is not to be put by; 120
 Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
 Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers
 Is something that doth live, 130
 That Nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benediction: not indeed
 For that which is most worthy to be blest,
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed

Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:

—Not for these I raise

The song of thanks and praise; 140

But for those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings,

Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,

High instincts, before which our mortal nature

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised;

But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may, 150

Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,

Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of the eternal silence: truths that wake

To perish never;

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,

Nor man nor boy,

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,

Can utterly abolish or destroy! 160

Hence, in a season of calm weather

Though inland far we be,

Our souls have sight of that immortal sea

Which brought us hither;

Can in a moment travel thither—

And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!

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We, in thought, will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,

Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind,

180

In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be,
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering,

In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight

190

To live beneath your more habitual sway;
I love the brooks which down their channels fret
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
 Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live, 200
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Byron

ROME

From *Childe Harold*, Canto IV

Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery.
What are our woes and sufferance? Come and *see*
The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
Whose agonies are evils of a day—
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

The Niobe of nations! there she stands, 10
Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;
An empty urn within her wither'd hands,
Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago;
The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless
Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,
Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?
Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire,
 Have dealt upon the seven-hill'd city's pride; 20
 She saw her glories star by star expire,
 And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride,
 Where the car climb'd the Capitol; far and wide
 Temple and tower went down, nor left a site:
 Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,
 O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,
 And say, "here was, or is", where all is doubly night?

The double night of ages, and of her,
 Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap
 All round us; we but feel our way to err: 30
 The ocean hath its chart, the stars their map,
 And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;
 But Rome is as the desert, where we steer
 Stumbling o'er recollections; now we clap
 Our hands, and cry "Eureka!" it is clear—
 When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

Alas! the lofty city! and alas!
 The trebly hundred triumphs! and the day
 When Brutus made the dagger's edge surpass
 The conqueror's sword in bearing fame away! 40
 Alas, for Tully's voice, and Virgil's lay,
 And Livy's pictured page!—but these shall be
 Her resurrection; all beside—decay.
 Alas, for Earth, for never shall we see
 That brightness in her eye she bore when Rome was free!

Oh thou, whose chariot roll'd on Fortune's wheel,
 Triumphant Sylla! Thou, who didst subdue
 Thy country's foes ere thou wouldst pause to feel
 The wrath of thy own wrongs, or reap the due
 Of hoarded vengeance till thine eagles flew
 O'er prostrate Asia;—thou, who with thy frown
 Annihilated senates—Roman, too,
 With all thy vices, for thou didst lay down
 With an atoning smile a more than earthly crown—

The dictatorial wreath—couldst thou divine
 To what would one day dwindle that which made
 Thee more than mortal? and that so supine
 By aught than Romans Rome should thus be laid?
 She who was named Eternal, and array'd
 Her warriors but to conquer—she who veil'd
 Earth with her haughty shadow, and display'd,
 Until the o'er-canopied horizon fail'd,
 Her rushing wings—Oh! she who was Almighty hail'd

Sylla was first of victors; but our own,
 The sagest of usurpers, Cromwell!—he
 Too swept off senates while he hew'd the throne
 Down to a block—immortal rebel! See
 What crimes it costs to be a moment free,
 And famous through all ages! but beneath
 His fate the moral lurks of destiny;
 His day of double victory and death
 Beheld him win two realms, and, happier, yield his breath

The third of the same moon whose former course
Had all but crown'd him, on the self-same day
Deposed him gently from his throne of force,
And laid him with the earth's preceding clay.
And show'd not Fortune thus how fame and sway,
And all we deem delightful, and consume
Our souls to compass through each arduous way,
Are in her eyes less happy than the tomb? 80
Were they but so in man's, how different were his doom!

And thou, dread statue! yet existent in
The austerest form of naked majesty,
Thou who beheldest, 'mid the assassins' din,
At thy bathed base the bloody Cæsar lie,
Folding his robe in dying dignity,
An offering to thine altar from the queen
Of gods and men, great Nemesis! did he die,
And thou, too, perish, Pompey? have ye been
Victors of countless kings, or puppets of a scene? 90

And thou, the thunder-stricken nurse of Rome!
She-wolf! whose brazen-imaged dugs impart
The milk of conquest yet within the dome
Where, as a monument of antique art,
Thou standest:—Mother of the mighty heart,
Which the great founder suck'd from thy wild teat,
Scorch'd by the Roman Jove's ethereal dart,
And thy limbs black with lightning—dost thou yet
Guard thine immortal cubs, nor thy fond charge forget?

Thou dost; but all thy foster-babes are dead— 100
 The men of iron: and the world hath rear'd
 Cities from out their sepulchres: men bled
 In imitation of the things they fear'd,
 And fought and conquer'd, and the same course
 steer'd,
 At apish distance; but as yet none have,
 Nor could, the same supremacy have near'd,
 Save one vain man, who is not in the grave,
 But, vanquish'd by himself, to his own slaves a slave—

 The fool of false dominion—and a kind
 Of bastard Cæsar, following him of old
 With steps unequal; for the Roman's mind
 Was modell'd in a less terrestrial mould,
 With passions fiercer, yet a judgment cold,
 And an immortal instinct which redeem'd
 The frailties of a heart so soft, yet bold,
 Alcides with the distaff now he seem'd
 At Cleopatra's feet,—and now himself he beam'd,

 And came—and saw—and conquer'd! But the man
 Who would have tamed his eagles down to flee,
 Like a train'd falcon, in the Gallic van,
 Which he, in sooth, long led to victory,
 With a deaf heart which never seem'd to be
 A listener to itself, was strangely framed;
 With but one weakest weakness—vanity,
 Coquettish in ambition, still he aim'd—
 At what? can he avouch, or answer what he claim'd?

And would be all or nothing—nor could wait
 For the sure grave to level him; few years
 Had fix'd him with the Cæsars in his fate,
 On whom we tread: For *this* the conqueror rears 130
 The arch of triumph! and for this the tears
 And blood of earth flow on as they have flow'd,
 An universal deluge, which appears
 Without an ark for wretched man's abode,
 And ebbs but to reflow! Renew thy rainbow, God!

.
 Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
 Streams like the thunder-storm *against* the wind;
 Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
 The loudest still the tempest leaves behind;
 Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind, 140
 Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
 But the sap lasts,—and still the seed we find
 Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;
 So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.

There is a stern round tower of other days,
 Firm as a fortress, with its fence of stone,
 Such as an army's baffled strength delays,
 Standing with half its battlements alone,
 And with two thousand years of ivy grown,
 The garland of eternity, where wave 150
 The green leaves over all by time o'erthrown;—
 What was this tower of strength? within its cave
 What treasure lay so lock'd, so hid?—A woman's grave.

But who was she, the lady of the dead,
 Tomb'd in a palace? Was she chaste and fair?
 Worthy a king's, or more—a Roman's bed?
 What race of chiefs and heroes did she bear?
 What daughter of her beauties was the heir?
 How lived, how loved, how died she? Was she not
 So honour'd—and conspicuously there, 160
 Where meaner relics must not dare to rot,
 Placed to commemorate a more than mortal lot?

Was she as those who love their lords, or they
 Who love the lords of others? such have been
 Even in the olden time, Rome's annals say.
 Was she a matron of Cornelia's mien,
 Or the light air of Egypt's graceful queen,
 Profuse of joy—or 'gainst it did she war
 Inveterate in virtue? Did she lean
 To the soft side of the heart, or wisely bar 170
 Love from amongst her griefs?—for such the affections
 are.

Perchance she died in youth: it may be, bow'd
 With woes far heavier than the ponderous tomb
 That weigh'd upon her gentle dust, a cloud
 Might gather o'er her beauty, and a gloom
 In her dark eye, prophetic of the doom
 Heaven gives its favourites—early death; yet shed
 A sunset charm around her, and illumine
 With hectic light, the Hesperus of the dead,
 Of her consuming cheek the autumnal leaf-like red. 180

Perchance she died in age—surviving all,
 Charms, kindred, children—with the silver gray
 On her long tresses, which might yet recall,
 It may be, still a something of the day
 When they were braided, and her proud array
 And lovely form were envied, praised, and eyed
 By Rome—But whither would Conjecture stray?
 Thus much alone we know—Metella died,
 The wealthiest Roman's wife: Behold his love or pride!

Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown 190
 Matted and mass'd together, hillocks heap'd
 On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
 In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescos steep'd
 In subterranean damp, where the owl peep'd,
 Deeming it midnight:—Temples, baths, or halls?
 Pronounce who can; for all that Learning reap'd
 From her research hath been, that these are walls—
 Behold the Imperial Mount! 't is thus the mighty falls.

There is the moral of all human tales;
 'T is but the same rehearsal of the past, 200
 First Freedom, and then Glory—when that fails,
 Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism at last.
 And History, with all her volumes vast,
 Hath but *one* page,—'t is better written here
 Where gorgeous Tyranny hath thus amass'd
 All treasures, all delights, that eye or ear,
 Heart, soul could seek, tongue ask—Away with words!
 draw near,

Admire, exult, despise, laugh, weep,—for here
 There is such matter for all feeling:—Man!
 Thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear, 210
 Ages and realms are crowded in this span,
 This mountain, whose obliterated plan
 The pyramid of empires pinnacled,
 Of Glory's gewgaws shining in the van
 Till the sun's rays with added flame were fill'd!
 Where are its golden roofs? where those who dared to
 build?

Tully was not so eloquent as thou,
 Thou nameless column with the buried base!
 What are the laurels of the Cæsar's brow?
 Crown me with ivy from his dwelling-place. 220
 Whose arch or pillar meets me in the face,
 Titus or Trajan's? No—'t is that of Time:
 Triumph, arch, pillar, all he doth displace
 Scoffing; and apostolic statues climb
 To crush the imperial urn, whose ashes slept sublime,

Buried in air, the deep blue sky of Rome,
 And looking to the stars: they had contain'd
 A spirit which with these would find a home,
 The last of those who o'er the whole earth reign'd,
 The Roman globe, for after none sustain'd, 230
 But yielded back his conquests:—he was more
 Than a mere Alexander, and, unstain'd
 With household blood and wine, serenely wore
 His sovereign virtues—still we Trajan's name adore.

Where is the rock of Triumph, the high place
 Where Rome embraced her heroes? where the steep
 Tarpeian? fittest goal of Treason's race,
 The promontory whence the Traitor's Leap
 Cured all ambition. Did the conquerors heap
 Their spoils here? Yes; and in yon field below, 240
 A thousand years of silenced factions sleep—
 The Forum, where the immortal accents glow,
 And still the eloquent air breathes—burns with Cicero!

The field of freedom, faction, fame, and blood:
 Here a proud people's passions were exhaled,
 From the first hour of empire in the bud
 To that when further worlds to conquer fail'd;
 But long before had Freedom's face been veil'd,
 And Anarchy assumed her attributes;
 Till every lawless soldier who assail'd 250
 Trod on the trembling senate's slavish mutes,
 Or raised the venal voice of baser prostitutes.

Then turn we to her latest tribune's name,
 From her ten thousand tyrants turn to thee,
 Redeemer of dark centuries of shame—
 The friend of Petrarch—hope of Italy—
 Rienzi! last of Romans! While the tree
 Of freedom's wither'd trunk puts forth a leaf,
 Even for thy tomb a garland let it be—
 The forum's champion, and the people's chief— 260
 Her new-born Numa thou—with reign, alas! too brief.

Egeria! sweet creation of some heart
Which found no mortal resting-place so fair
As thine ideal breast; whate'er thou art
Or wert,—a young Aurora of the air,
The nympholepsy of some fond despair;
Or, it might be, a beauty of the earth,
Who found a more than common votary there
Too much adoring; whatsoe'er thy birth, 269
Thou wert a beautiful thought, and softly bodied forth.

The mosses of thy fountain still are sprinkled
With thine Elysian water-drops; the face
Of thy cave-guarded spring with years unwrinkled,
Reflects the meek-eyed genius of the place,
Whose green, wild margin now no more erase
Art's works; nor must the delicate waters sleep,
Prison'd in marble, bubbling from the base
Of the cleft statue, with a gentle leap
The rill runs o'er, and round fern, flowers, and ivy creep,

Fantastically tangled: the green hills 280
Are clothed with early blossoms, through the grass
The quick-eyed lizard rustles, and the bills
Of summer-birds sing welcome as ye pass;
Flowers fresh in hue, and many in their class,
Implore the pausing step, and with their dyes,
Dance in the soft breeze in a fairy mass;
The sweetness of the violet's deep blue eyes,
Kiss'd by the breath of heaven, seems colour'd by its skies.

Here didst thou dwell, in this enchanted cover,
 Egeria! thy all heavenly bosom beating 290
 For the far footsteps of thy mortal lover;
 The purple Midnight veil'd that mystic meeting
 With her most starry canopy, and seating
 Thyself by thine adorer, what befell?
 This cave was surely shaped out for the greeting
 Of an enamour'd Goddess, and the cell
 Haunted by holy Love—the earliest oracle!

And didst thou not, thy breast to his replying,
 Blend a celestial with a human heart;
 And Love, which dies as it was born, in sighing, 300
 Share with immortal transports? could thine art
 Make them indeed immortal, and impart
 The purity of heaven to earthly joys,
 Expel the venom and not blunt the dart—
 The dull satiety which all destroys—
 And root from out the soul the deadly weed which cloy?

.
 Arches on arches! as it were that Rome,
 Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
 Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
 Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine 310
 As 't were its natural torches, for divine
 Should be the light which streams here to illumine
 This long-explored but still exhaustless mine
 Of contemplation; and the azure gloom
 Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume

Hues which have words, and speak to ye of heaven,
 Floats o'er this vast and wondrous monument,
 And shadows forth its glory. There is given
 Unto the things of earth, which Time hath bent,
 A spirit's feeling, and where he hath leant 320
 His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
 And magic in the ruin'd battlement,
 For which the palace of the present hour
 Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower.

And here the buzz of eager nations ran,
 In murmur'd pity, or loud-roar'd applause,
 As man was slaughter'd by his fellow-man.
 And wherefore slaughter'd? wherefore, but because
 Such were the bloody Circus' genial laws,
 And the imperial pleasure.—Wherefore not? 330
 What matters where we fall to fill the maws
 Of worms—on battle-plains or listed spot?
 Both are but theatres where the chief actors rot.

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
 He leans upon his hand—his manly brow
 Consents to death, but conquers agony,
 And his droop'd head sinks gradually low—
 And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
 From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
 Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now 340
 The arena swims around him—he is gone,
 Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hail'd the wretch
 who won.

He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away;
He reck'd not of the life he lost nor prize,
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday—
All this rush'd with his blood—Shall he expire 350
And unavenged? Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!

But here, where Murder breathed her bloody steam;
And here, where buzzing nations choked the ways,
And roar'd or murmur'd like a mountain stream
Dashing or winding as its torrent strays;
Here, where the Roman million's blame or praise
Was death or life, the playthings of a crowd,
My voice sounds much—and fall the stars' faint
rays
In the arena void—seats crush'd—walls bow'd—
And galleries, where my steps seem echoes strangely
loud.

A ruin—yet what ruin! from its mass
Walls, palaces, half-cities, have been rear'd;
Yet oft the enormous skeleton ye pass,
And marvel where the spoil could have appear'd.
Hath it indeed been plunder'd, or but clear'd?
Alas! developed, opens the decay,
When the colossal fabric's form is near'd:

It will not bear the brightness of the day,
Which streams too much on all years, man, have reft
away.

But when the rising moon begins to climb 370
Its topmost arch, and gently pauses there;
When the stars twinkle through the loops of time,
And the low night-breeze waves along the air
The garland-forest, which the gray walls wear,
Like laurels on the bald first Cæsar's head;
When the light shines serene but doth not glare,
Then in this magic circle raise the dead:
Heroes have trod this spot—'t is on their dust ye tread.

" While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
" When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall; 380
" And when Rome falls—the World." From our own
land
Thus spake the pilgrims o'er this mighty wall
In Saxon times, which we are wont to call
Ancient; and these three mortal things are still
On their foundations, and unalter'd all;
Rome and her Ruin past Redemption's skill,
The World, the same wide den—of thieves, or what ye
will.

Simple, erect, severe, austere, sublime—
Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods,
From Jovē to Jesus—spared and blest by time; 390

Looking tranquillity, while falls or nods
 Arch, empire, each thing round thee, and man plods
 His way through thorns to ashes—glorious dome!
 Shalt thou not last? Time's scythe and tyrants"
 rods

Shiver upon thee—sanctuary and home
 Of art and piety—Pantheon!—pride of Rome!

Relic of nobler days, and noblest arts!
 Despoil'd yet perfect, with thy circle spreads
 A holiness appealing to all hearts—
 To art a model; and to him who treads 400
 Rome for the sake of ages, Glory sheds
 Her light through thy sole aperture; to those
 Who worship, here are altars for their beads;
 And they who feel for genius may repose
 Their eyes on honour'd forms, whose busts around them
 close.

.
 Turn to the mole which Hadrian rear'd on high,
 Imperial mimic of old Egypt's piles,
 Colossal copyist of deformity,
 Whose travell'd phantasy from the far Nile's
 Enormous model, doom'd the artist's toils 410
 To build for giants, and for his vain earth,
 His shrunken ashes, raise this dome: How smiles
 The gazer's eye with philosophic mirth,
 To view the huge design which sprung from such a
 birth!

But lo! the dome—the vast and wondrous dome,
 To which Diana's marvel was a cell—
 Christ's mighty shrine above his martyr's tomb!
 I have beheld the Ephesian's miracle;—
 Its columns strew the wilderness, and dwell
 The hyæna and the jackal in their shade; 420
 I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell
 Their glittering mass i' the sun, and have survey'd
 Its sanctuary the while the usurping Moslem pray'd;

But thou, of temples old, or altars new,
 Standest alone, with nothing like to thee—
 Worthiest of God, the holy and the true.
 Since Zion's desolation, when that He
 Forsook his former city, what could be,
 Of earthly structures, in his honour piled,
 Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty, 430
 Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled
 In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

Enter: its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
 And why? It is not lessen'd; but thy mind,
 Expanded by the genius of the spot,
 Has grown colossal, and can only find
 A fit abode wherein appear enshrined
 Thy hopes of immortality; and thou
 Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
 See thy God face to face, as thou dost now 440
 His Holy of Holies, nor be blasted by his brow

Thou movest, but increasing with the advance,
Like climbing some great Alp, which still doth rise,
Deceived by its gigantic elegance;
Vastness which grows, but grows to harmonise—
All musical in its immensities;
Rich marbles, richer painting—shrines where flame
The lamps of gold—and haughty dome which vies
In air with Earth's chief structures, though their frame
Sits on the firm-set ground, and this the clouds must
claim. 450

Thou seest not all; but piecemeal thou must break,
To separate contemplation, the great whole;
And as the ocean many bays will make
That ask the eye—so here condense thy soul
To more immediate objects, and control
Thy thoughts until thy mind hath got by heart
Its eloquent proportions, and unroll
In mighty graduations, part by part,
The glory which at once upon thee did not dart,

Not by its fault—but thine: Our outward sense 460
Is but of gradual grasp—and as it is
That what we have of feeling most intense
Outstrips our faint expression; even so this
Outshining and o'erwhelming edifice
Fools our fond gaze, and greatest of the great
Defies at first our Nature's littleness,
Till, growing with its growth, we thus dilate
Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate.

Then pause, and be enlighten'd; there is more
 In such a survey than the sating gaze 470
 Of wonder pleased, or awe which would adore
 The worship of the place, or the mere praise
 Of art and its great masters, who could raise
 What former time, nor skill, nor thought could plan;
 The fountain of sublimity displays
 Its depth, and thence may draw the mind of man
 Its golden sands, and learn what great conceptions can.

Or, turning to the Vatican, go see
 Laocoön's torture dignifying pain—
 A father's love and mortal's agony 480
 With an immortal's patience blending: Vain
 The struggle; vain, against the coiling strain
 And gripe, and deepening of the dragon's grasp,
 The old man's clench; the long envenom'd chain
 Rivets the living links,—the enormous asp
 Enforces pang on pang, and stifles gasp on gasp.

Or view the Lord of the unerring bow.
 The God of life, and poesy, and light—
 The Sun in human limbs array'd, and brow
 All radiant from his triumph in the fight; 490
 The shaft hath just been shot—the arrow bright
 With an immortal's vengeance; in his eye
 And nostril beautiful disdain, and might
 And majesty, flash their full lightnings by,
 Developing in that one glance the Deity.

But in his delicate form—a dream of Love,
Shaped by some solitary nymph, whose breast
Long'd for a deathless lover from above,
And madden'd in that vision—are exprest
All that ideal beauty ever bless'd 500
The mind with in its most unearthly mood,
When each conception was a heavenly guest—
A ray of immortality—and stood
Starlike, around, until they gather'd to a god!

And if it be Prometheus stole from Heaven
The fire which we endure, it was repaid
By him to whom the energy was given
Which this poetic marble hath array'd
With an eternal glory—which, if made
By human hands, is not of human thought; 510
And Time himself hath hallow'd it, nor laid
One ringlet in the dust—nor hath it caught
A tinge of years, but breathes the flame with which
't was wrought.

Shelley

THE SENSITIVE PLANT

PART FIRST

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness, 10
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

SHELLEY

31

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness;

20

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast, 30
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare:

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

40

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across, 50
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flow'rets which drooping as day drooped too
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet 60
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small fruit 70
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all,—it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver:

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love; its deep heart is full;
It desires what it has not, the beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings;
The beams which dart from many a star 80
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumed insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream;

90

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
While the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep, 100
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were
drowned

In an ocean of dreams without a sound;
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness;

(Only over head the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant.)

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of night.

110

PART SECOND

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind 120
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth!

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise: 130

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted Heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,

That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footsteps trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

140

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint from the sunny beam;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers.

150

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket, of grasses and wild flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull

160

For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

170

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died!

PART THIRD

Three days the flowers of the garden fair
Like stars when the moon is awakened were,
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low;

180

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tale
And sat in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed; 210
Their whistling tune made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the winged seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks 220
Were bent and tangled across the walks;
And the leafless network of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank, 230
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum, 240
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill:
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noon-day
Unseen; every branch on which they alit 250
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

SHELLEY

41

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came: the wind was his whip: 260
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne,
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost 270
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
 Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
 Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,
 And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

280

When winter had gone and spring came back
 The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck;
 But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and
 darnels,
 Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
 Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
 Ere its outward form had known decay,
 Now felt this change, I cannot say.

290

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
 No longer with the form combined
 Which scattered love, as stars do light,
 Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess; but in this life
 Of error, ignorance, and strife,
 Where nothing is, but all things seem,
 And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
 Pleasant if one considers it,

300

To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that Lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away:
'T is we, 't is ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change: their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

310

Keats

LAMIA

PART I

Upon a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,

And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose. 20
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret
bed: 30

In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!
"When move in a sweet body fit for life,
"And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife 40
"Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"
The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round hush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,

Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and *cirque-couchant* in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

“ Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,
“ I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
“ I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
“ Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,

"The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
 "The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear,
 "Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
 "Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious
 moan.

"I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
 "Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
 "And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,
 "Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
 "Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?" 80
 Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd
 His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:

"Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired!
 "Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
 "Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
 "Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
 "Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou hast
 said,"

Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"

"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
 "And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!" 90
 Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
 Then thus again the brilliance feminine:

"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
 "Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
 "About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
 "She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
 "Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
 "From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,

" She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
" And by my power is her beauty veil'd
" To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd
" By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
" Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.
" Pale grew her immortality, for woe
" Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
" I took compassion on her, bade her steep
" Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
" Her loveliness invisible, yet free
" To wander as she loves, in liberty.
" Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
" If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
" I was a woman, let me have once more
" A woman's shape, and charming as before.
" I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
" Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
" Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
" And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green
It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass

Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
 One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem
 Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd; 130
 Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd
 To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
 Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean charm.
 So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
 Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
 And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,
 Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
 That faints into itself at evening hour:
 But the God fostering her chilled hand, 140
 She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,
 And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
 Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.
 Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
 Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
 To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
 Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,
 Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
 Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear, 150
 Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
 Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling
 tear.

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
 She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:

A deep volcanian yellow took the place
 Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;
 And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
 Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
 Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars: 160
 So that, in moments few, she was undrest
 Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
 And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
 Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
 Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
 Melted and disappear'd as suddenly;
 And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
 Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft
 With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
 These words dissolv'd: Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright, 171
 A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
 She fled into that valley they pass o'er
 Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;
 And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
 The rugged founts of the Peraean rills,
 And of that other ridge whose barren back
 Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
 South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
 About a young bird's flutter from a wood, 180
 Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
 By a clear pool, wherein she passioned

To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core: 190
Not one hour old, yet of scintial brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so faerily 200
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 't is fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
(■ 118)

Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine; 210
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
Muciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim 220
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire 230
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,

His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen 240
She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabbling thus, “ Ah, Lycius bright,
“ And will you leave me on the hills alone?
“ Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown.”
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long: 250
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure:
“ Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
“ Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
“ For pity do not this sad heart belie—
“ Even as thou vanishest so shall I die. 260
“ Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
“ To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
“ Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
“ Alone they can drink up the morning rain:
“ Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
“ Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
“ Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine?

" So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
 " Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
 " Thy memory will waste me to a shade:— 270
 " For pity do not melt!"—" If I should stay,"
 Said Lamia, " here, upon this floor of clay,
 " And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
 " What canst thou say or do of charm enough
 " To dull the nice remembrance of my home?
 " Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
 " Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
 " Empty of immortality and bliss!
 " Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
 " That finer spirits cannot breathe below 280
 " In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
 " What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
 " My essence? What serener palaces,
 " Where I may all my many senses please,
 " And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
 " It cannot be—Adieu!" So said, she rose
 Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
 The amorous promise of her lone complain,
 Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
 The cruel lady, without any show 290
 Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
 But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
 With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
 Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
 The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
 And as he from one trance was wakening

Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting
fires. 300

And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss 310
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,
Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd
Late on that eve, as 't was the night before
The Adonian feast; whereof she saw no more, 320
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;
Then from amaze into delight he fell

To hear her whisper woman's lore so well;
And every word she spake entic'd him on
To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all, 330
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply, 340
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
If 't was too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized.
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all, 350
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,

Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companion'd or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade 360
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
With curl'd grey beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald
crown,

Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,
"Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?
"Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"— 370
"I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who
"Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
"His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind
"Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied,
"Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
"And good instructor; but to-night he seems
"The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,

Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow 380
 Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
 Mild as a star in water; for so new,
 And so unsullied was the marble's hue,
 So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
 Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
 Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian
 Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
 Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown
 Some time to any, but those two alone,
 And a few Persian mutes, who that same year 390
 Were seen about the markets: none knew where
 They could inhabit; the most curious
 Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house:
 And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
 For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
 'T would humour many a heart to leave them thus,
 Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART II

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
 Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
 Love in a palace is perhaps at last
 More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:
 That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
 Hard for the non-elect to understand.
 Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
 He might have given the moral a fresh frown,

Or clench'd it quite: but too short was their bliss
 To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.
 Beside, there, nightly, with terrific glare, 11
 Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
 Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
 Above the lintel of their chamber door,
 And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
 They were enthroned, in the even tide,
 Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
 Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
 Floated into the room, and let appear 20
 Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
 Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed,
 Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
 Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
 That they might see each other while they almost slept;
 When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
 Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
 Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
 But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
 For the first time, since first he harbour'd in 30
 That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
 His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
 Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
 The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
 Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
 Of something more, more than her empery

Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whisper'd he: 40
"Why do you think?" return'd she tenderly:
"You have deserted me;—where am I now?
"Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
"No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go
"From your breast houseless: aye, it must be so."
He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,
"My silver planet, both of eve and morn!
"Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
"While I am striving how to fill my heart 50
"With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
"How to entangle, trammel up and snare
"Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
"Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
"Aye, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
"My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
"What mortal hath a prize, that other men
"May be confounded and abash'd withal,
"But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,
"And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice 60
"Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
"Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
"While through the thronged streets your bridal car
"Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's cheek
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,

Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim: 70
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self he took delight,
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 't was possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she 80
Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
“Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
“I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
“Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
“As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
“Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
“Or friends or kinsfolk on the citted earth, 90
“To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?”
“I have no friends,” said Lamia, “no, not one;
“My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
“My parents' bones are in their dusty urns

" Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
 " Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
 " And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
 " Even as you list invite your many guests;
 " But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
 " With any pleasure on me, do not bid 100
 " Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid."
 Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,
 Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
 Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
 Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away
 The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
 Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along
 By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
 With other pageants: but this fair unknown 110
 Had not a friend. So being left alone,
 (Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
 And knowing surely she could never win
 His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
 She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
 The misery in fit magnificence.
 She did so, but 't is doubtful how and whence
 Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
 About the halls, and to and from the doors,
 There was a noise of wings, till in short space 120
 The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched
 grace.

A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch'd one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all 130
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to
wall.

So canopied, lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper panels; then, anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees, 140
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,

And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
 The herd approach'd; each guest, with busy brain, 150
 Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,
 And enter'd marvelling: for they knew the street,
 Remember'd it from childhood all complete
 Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
 That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne;
 So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen:
 Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
 And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere;
 'T was Apollonius: something too he laugh'd,
 As though some knotty problem, that had daft 160
 His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
 And solve and melt:—'t was just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
 His young disciple. " 'T is no common rule,
 Lycius," said he, " for uninvited guest
 " To force himself upon you, and infest
 " With an unbidden presence the bright throng
 " Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong,
 " And you forgive me." Lycius blush'd, and led
 The old man through the inner doors broad-spread; 170
 With reconciling words and courteous mien
 Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
 Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume:
 Before each lucid panel fuming stood

A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took 180
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God. 190

When in an antechamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could
spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong 200
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low

At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
 But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
 Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
 Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
 The space, the splendour of the draperies,
 The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
 Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
 Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
 And every soul from human trammels freed, 210
 No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
 Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
 Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
 Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double
 bright:

Garlands of every green, and every scent
 From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,
 In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
 High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
 Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
 Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease. 220

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
 What for the sage, old Apollonius?
 Upon her aching forehead be there hung
 The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;
 And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
 The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
 Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage

KEATS

67

War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it crewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

230

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or a stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet
pride.

240

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
'T was icy, and the cold ran through his veins;
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
"Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?
"Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answer'd not.

250

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot
 Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
 More, more he gaz'd: his human senses reel:
 Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
 There was no recognition in those orbs. 260
 "Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
 The many heard, and the loud revelry
 Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
 The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
 By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
 A deadly silence step by step increased,
 Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
 And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
 "Lamia!" he shriek'd; and nothing but the shriek
 With its sad echo did the silence break. 270
 "Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
 In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
 Wander'd on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
 Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
 The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
 Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
 "Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
 "Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
 "Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
 "Here represent their shadowy presences, 280
 "May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
 "Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
 "In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
 "Of conscience, for their long offended might,

“ For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
“ Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
“ Corinthians! look upon that grey-beard wretch!
“ Mark how, possess’d, his lashless eyelids stretch
“ Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
“ My sweet bride withers at their potency.” 290
“ Fool!” said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycius answer’d, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
“ Fool! Fool!” repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov’d; “ from every ill
“ Of life have I preserv’d thee to this day,
“ And shall I see thee made a serpent’s prey?”
Then Lamia breath’d death breath; the sophist’s eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly, 300
Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion’d him to be silent; vainly so,
He look’d and look’d again a level—No!
“ A serpent!” echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycius’ arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found, 310
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

Tennyson

THE PALACE OF ART

I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well."

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd brass,
I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf
The rock rose clear, or winding stair. 10
My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.

And "while the world runs round and round," I said,
"Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring."

TENNYSON

71

To which my soul made answer readily:

“ Trust me, in bliss I shall abide

In this great mansion, that is built for me,

So royal-rich and wide.”

20

Four courts I made, East, West, and South, and North,

In each a squared lawn, wherefrom

The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth

A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran a row

Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,

Echoing all night to that sonorous flow

Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery

That lent broad verge to distant lands,

30

Far as the wild swan wings, to where the sky

Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one swell

Across the mountain stream'd below

In misty folds, that floating as they fell

Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd

To hang on tiptoe, tossing up

A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd

From out a golden cup.

40

So that she thought, "And who shall gaze upon
 My palace with unblinded eyes,
 While this great bow will waver in the sun,
 And that sweet incense rise?"

For that sweet incense rose and never fail'd,
 And, while day sank or mounted higher,
 The light aerial gallery, golden-rail'd,
 Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd and traced,
 Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
 From shadow'd grotts of arches interlaced,
 And tipt with frost-like spires.

50

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
 That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
 Through which the livelong day my soul did pass,
 Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
 All various, each a perfect whole
 From living Nature, fit for every mood
 And change of my still soul.

60

For some were hung with arras green and blue,
 Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
 Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter blew
 His wreathed bugle-horn.

TENNYSON

73

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry waves,
You seem'd to hear them climb and fall 70
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
And hoary to the wind. 80

And one, a foreground black with stones and slags,
Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
All barr'd with long white cloud the scornful crags,
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight pour'd
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
 As fit for every mood of mind,
 Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there,
 Not less than truth design'd.

90

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
 In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
 Beneath branch-work of costly sardonix
 Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,
 Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
 Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
 An angel look'd at her.

100

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,
 A group of Houris bow'd to see
 The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
 That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
 In some fair space of sloping greens
 Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
 And watch'd by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
 To list a footfall, ere he saw
 The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian king to hear
 Of wisdom and of law.

110

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,
 And many a tract of palm and rice,
 The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd
 A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
 From off her shoulder backward borne;
 From one hand droop'd a crocus; one hand grasp'd
 The mild bull's golden horn. 120

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh
 Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
 Sole as a flying star shot through the sky
 Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
 Which the supreme Caucasian mind
 Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
 Not less than life, design'd.

.
 Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
 Moved of themselves, with silver sound; 130
 And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
 The royal daïs round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong;
 Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
 And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd his song,
 And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest:
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

140

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and stings; 150
Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure;
And here once more like some sick man declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod: and those great bells
Began to chime. She took her throne:
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

160

And through the topmost Oriels' colour'd flame
Two godlike faces gazed below;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion were
Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd fair
In diverse raiment strange:

Through which the lights, rose, amber, emerald, blue,
Flush'd in her temples and her eyes, 170
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon, drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echo'd song
Throb through the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five; 180

Communing with herself: "All these are mine,
And let the world have peace or wars,
'T is one to me." She—when young night divine
Crown'd dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and cried,
"I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,
Be flatter'd to the height.

190

"O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
O shapes and hues that please me well!
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

"O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

200

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep."

Then of the moral instinct would she prate,
And of the rising from the dead,
As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate;
And at the last she said:

" I take possession of man's mind and deed.

I care not what the sects may brawl,

210

I sit as God holding no form of creed,

But contemplating all."

.

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth

Flash'd through her as she sat alone,

Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth

And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prosper'd: so three years

She prosper'd: on the fourth she fell,

Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,

Struck through with pangs of hell.

220

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,

God, before whom ever lie bare

The abysmal deeps of Personality,

Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turn'd her sight

The airy hand confusion wrought,

Wrote " Mene, mene," and divided quite

The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude

Fell on her, from which mood was born

230

Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood

Laughter at her self-scorn.

"What! is not this my place of strength," she said,
 "My spacious mansion built for me,
 Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
 Since my first memory?"

But in dark corners of her palace stood
 Uncertain shapes; and unawares
 On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
 And horrible nightmares, 240

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,
 And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
 On corpses three-months-old at noon she came
 That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
 Or power of movement, seem'd my soul,
 'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
 Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand;
 Left on the shore; that hears all night 250
 The plunging seas draw backward from the land
 Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
 Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw
 The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
 Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curl'd.

“No voice,” she shrieked in that lone hall,

“No voice breaks through the stillness of this world:

One deep, deep silence all!”

260

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,

Inwraught tenfold in slothful shame,

Lay there exilèd from eternal God,

Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,

And nothing saw, for her despair,

But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,

No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,

And ever worse with growing time,

270

And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,

And all alone in crime:

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round

With blackness as a solid wall,

Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound

Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,

In doubt and great perplexity,

A little before moon-rise hears the low

Moan of an unknown sea;

280

And knows not if it be thunder or a sound
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, "I have found
A new land, but I die."

She howl'd aloud, "I am on fire within.
There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die?"

So when four years were wholly finishèd,
She threw her royal robes away.
"Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
"Where I may mourn and pray."

290

"Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built:
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt."

THE LOTOS-EATERS

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land,
In which it seemèd always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke 10
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed: and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmèd sunset lingered low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale 20
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them, 30
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,

84 NINETEENTH CENTURY POEMS

His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore 40
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then someone said, " We will return no more ";
And all at once they sang, " Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

CHORIC SONG

1

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies, 50
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful
skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone? 60
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood, 70
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days, 80
The flower ripens in its place,

Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last? 90
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem 100
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,

To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory, 110
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold 120
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The gods are hard to reconcile:
'T is hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath, 130
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelids still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine— 140
 To watch the emerald-coloured water falling
 Thro' many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
 All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-
 dust is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of motion we, 150
 Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge
 was seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-foun-
 tains in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined

On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
curled

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming
world:

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps
and fiery sands, 160

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song

Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,

Sow the seed and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 't is whispered
—down in hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel. 170
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the
shore

Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and
oar;

Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

Browning

PIPPA PASSES

1841

INTRODUCTION

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN

SCENE.—*A large mean airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the Silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

Day!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid grey
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed, 10
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the
world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
 A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
 The least of thy gazes or glances,
 (Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
 One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
 (Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy
 pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
 Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me! 20

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
 Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
 Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
 As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
 All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
 As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
 At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
 In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
 And free to let alone what thou refusest;
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest 30
 Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
 Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
 All other men and women that this earth
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
 Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
 Get more joy one way, if another, less:
 Thou art my single day, God lends to heaven

What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-day;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brother's home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.

But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
 Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil 70
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!

And here I let time slip for nought!
 Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
 With a single splash from my ewer!
 You that would mock the best pursuer,
 Was my basin over-deep?
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing: 80
 Now grow together on the ceiling!
 That will task your wits.

Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily . . .
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll! 90
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
 Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
 Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
 Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
 I am queen of thee, floweret!
 And each fleshy blossom
 Preserve I not—(safer

Than leaves that embower it,
 Or shells that embosom)
 —From weevil and chafer? 100
 Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
 Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
 Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
 Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
 My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
 The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
 But, this one day, I have leave to go,
 And play out my fancy's fullest games; 110
 I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
 That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
 Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,
 Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
 I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
 The gardens, and the great stone house above,
 And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
 Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
 To court me, while old Luca yet reposes: 120
 And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
 I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
 About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
 Too bold, too confident she 'll still face down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!

But love, love, love—there 's better love, I know!
This foolish love was only day's first offer;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally 130
Out of Possagno church at noon?
Their house looks over Orcana valley:
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!
—So strict was she, the veil 140
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead:
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve 150
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!

How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I 'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me? 160
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird— 170
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall 180
Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,

Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
 Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
 With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
 What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God: 190
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small"?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A "great event" should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed 200
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
 A pretty thing to care about

So mightily, this single holiday!
 But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
 Down the grass path grey with dew, 210
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
 Where the swallow never flew
 Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
 No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*]

CONCLUSION

SCENE.—PIPPA'S chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
 The mouse at her dray,
 The grub in his tomb,
 Wile winter away;
 But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
 How fare they?
 Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
 “Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze”
 The summer of life so easy to spend,
 And care for to-morrow so soon put away! 10
 But winter hastens at summer's end,
 And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
 How fare they?
 No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?
 “Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
 More like ” . . . (what said she?) “and less like canoes!”
 How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert

Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me: 20
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings.
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth
name

But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter 30
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there's that proud look to spare! 40

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed

On some good errand or another,
 For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
 And the sullen company that prowled
 About his path, I noticed, scowled
 As if they had lost a prey in him. 50
 And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
 And I was Ottima beside,
 And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
 Day for folly, night for schooling!
 New Year's day is over and spent,
 Ill or well, I must be content.

Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
 Wake up—here 's a friend I 've plucked you:
 Call this flower a heart's-case now!
 Something rare, let me instruct you, 60
 Is this, with petals triply swollen,
 Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
 While the leaves and parts that witness
 Old proportions and their fitness,
 Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
 Call this pampered thing improved now!
 Suppose there 's a king of the flowers
 And a girl-show held in his bowers—
 " Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
 Says he, " Zanze from the Brenta, 70
 I have made her gorge polenta
 Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
 As her . . . name there 's no pronouncing!
 See this heightened colour too,

BROWNING

101

For she swilled Breganze wine
Till her nose turned deep carmine;
'T was but white when wild she grew.
And only by this Zanze's eyes
Of which we could not change the size,
The magnitude of all achieved
Otherwise, may be perceived."

80

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

90

[After she has begun to undress herself.

Now, one thing I should like to really know:
How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day:

100

—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you
 please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.

For instance, if I wind

Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bedside.*

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.

Ah me, and my important part with them,

This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!

True in some sense or other, I suppose.

110

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God—

With God, whose puppets, best and worst,

Are we: there is no last nor first.

[*She sleeps.*

NOTES

WORDSWORTH—ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

Line 21. **tabor's sound.** A tabor is a small drum, usually beaten with one stick.

28. **fields of sleep.** A phrase of doubtful meaning. Prof. Knight, following Hawes Turner, suggests the meaning of the line to be: "The morning breeze blowing from the fields that were dark during the hours of sleep." Another interpretation is that the "fields" are a designedly vague combination of the Elysian Fields and the Garden of Sleep.

58. **a sleep and a forgetting.** Here enters the theory of Anamnesis. Wordsworth seems to have been criticized by orthodox Christian friends for having used pagan thoughts such as this in his poetry, and defended himself with great solemnity, showing that there was nothing contrary to the theory in the Bible, that the Fall of Man suggested an analogy with the theory and that, in any case, he "Took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having a sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet."

70. **in his joy.** Wordsworth often emphasizes, as here, that man sees deeper into life when in a state of joy than at other times.

110. **Thou best philosopher.** Coleridge, in the *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XXII, in speaking of the few defects he found in Wordsworth's genius, selects this passage (to line 119) to illustrate the defect of "mental bombast" or of giving thoughts and images too great for the subject. Coleridge's whole discussion of the subject should be read.

143. **Fallings from us, vanishings.** This is a reference to such experiences of the poet's childhood and youth as the

following, given by himself: "Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being . . . I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or a tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines—'Obstinate questionings, &c.' To that dream-like vividness and splendour which invests objects of sight in childhood, everyone, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony." The visible and tangible universe seeming to Wordsworth to slip away into invisibility and intangibility encourages his mind in its attempt to escape the pressure of time and circumstance that is felt like a cage round his spirit.

BYRON — ROME

10. **Niobe.** In Greek legend Niobe had twelve children and boasted her possession of them against the goddess Leto who had only two, Apollo and Artemis, who avenged their mother by shooting down all Niobe's children, one by one, with their arrows.

14. **The Scipios' tomb.** Discovered near the Appian Way in 1780. The elder and younger Scipio gained fame in connexion with Rome's wars against Carthage.

18. **yellow waves.** "Flavus", or "yellow-haired", was a regular epithet for the Tiber in Roman times.

19. **The Goth.** Rome was taken by Alaric in A.D. 410, and by Totila in A.D. 546.

20. **the seven-hill'd city's pride.** It is well known that Rome in the imperial days was built on seven hills.

22. **the steep.** When a Roman general was accorded a "triumph" by the State, he drove his chariot up the Capitoline hill, followed by conquered chiefs as captives. In Rome's decay it was the turn of Barbarian chiefs like the Goths to ride triumphantly up the same way.

35. "**Eureka!**" "I have found it!" The cry of the Greek scientist of Syracuse, Archimedes, when he discovered the method of displacement by water for testing the purity of the gold of King Hiero's crown without spoiling it.

39. **Brutus.** The Marcus Brutus whom Shakespeare has made famous as the leader of the conspiracy which slew Julius Cæsar.

41. **Tully's voice.** Cicero's second name was Tullius. He lived from 106 to 43 B.C., and was Rome's greatest orator.

Virgil's lay. The *Æneid* of Virgil (70-19 B.C.) is the greatest epic in the Latin language.

42. **Livy's pictured page.** The history of Rome of Livy 59 B.C. to A.D. 17).

47. **Triumphant Sylla!** In the last years of a republican Rome Sulla was one of the great party leaders and dictators. He was called "felix" or "the fortunate". He subdued first Marius, the leader of the opposing party, and then set out in 87 B.C. for the war against Mithridates of Pontus ("prostrate Asia").

65. **Cromwell.** This half-favourable, half-hostile view of Cromwell's character lies midway between Gray's total disapproval in *The Elegy* of seventy years before, and Carlyle's whole-hearted championship in *The Life and Letters of Cromwell* of thirty years later.

71. **His day.** Byron's note: "On the 3rd of September Cromwell gained the victory of Dunbar, a year afterwards he obtained his 'crowning mercy' of Worcester; and, a few years after, on the same day, which he had ever esteemed the most fortunate for him, died."

82. **dread statue!** The statue of Pompey, now in the Spada Palace. It is notable as the only nude statue of a great man of the great days of Rome.

85. **At thy bathed base.** Julius Cæsar fell assassinated at the feet of the statue of Pompey, whom he himself had formerly defeated and driven from Italy, on 15th March, 44 B.C., in the Curia of Pompey, where the Roman Senate then met.

88. **Nemesis!** The Greek goddess of retribution.

91. **nurse of Rome!** The bronze wolf in the Capitoline Museum, representing the she-wolf which is supposed to have suckled Romulus and Remus, of whom the former is the mythical founder of Rome. The fracture in the hind leg of the bronze figure is said to have been caused by lightning.

97. **the Roman Jove's ethereal dart.** The lightning is represented, in Roman mythology, as Jupiter's weapon.

107. **one vain man.** Napoleon Buonaparte.

116. **Alcides.** Hercules, who was once sold as a slave to Omphale, Queen of Lydia, and was obliged to do spinning for her. Julius Cæsar was held six months in Alexandria by the young Cleopatra's charms after he arrived there in pursuit of Pompey, 48 B.C.

118. **And came—and saw—and conquer'd!** Cæsar's own description—"Veni, vidi, vici!" of his campaign against Pharnaces, King of Pontus.

137. **against.** It is Byron's practice to italicize words, in prosaic fashion, whenever he thinks their force may be missed. Here the active resistance of the cause of Freedom against almost overwhelming odds is plainly meant.

145. **tower.** The tomb of Cæcilia Metella, on the Appian Way, two miles from Rome.

166. **Cornelia's mien.** Cornelia was the mother of the Gracchi, heroes of the republican days of Rome.

167. **Egypt's graceful queen.** Cleopatra.

179. **Hesperus of the dead.** Hesperus, the evening star, is here used as a metaphor for the red spot on the cheeks of consumptives which is a presage of their end.

198. **Imperial Mount!** The Palatine Hill, on which were the residences of the first Emperor Augustus and his successors.

218. **nameless column.** A solitary column in the Forum, whose pedestal was excavated in 1816. It is now known to have been dedicated to the Emperor Phocas in 606 A.D.

222. **Titus or Trajan's?** The arch of the Emperor Titus, built to commemorate his capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The column of the Emperor Trajan is now surmounted by a statue of St. Peter, as that of Marcus Aurelius is by one of St. Paul ("apostolic statues", l. 224.)

232. **Alexander.** The great king of Macedon, while drunk at a banquet, killed his close friend Clitus.

235. **the rock of Triumph.** The Capitoline hill.

238. **the Traitor's Leap.** Traitors to the Roman state were thrown, in the ancient days, from the Tarpeian Rock.

242. **The Forum.** The market-place of ancient Rome, used also for a public meeting-place and elections. Cicero's orations were frequently delivered in the forum.

257. **Rienzi!** Leader of an insurrection in Rome in A.D. 1347, against the tyrannous nobles. He was proclaimed tribune and carried through a number of reforms.

261. **Numa.** The mythical King-lawgiver of Rome.

262. **Egeria!** The nymph who was fabled to be the spouse of Numa and to inspire him with the laws which he laid down for the observance of religious ceremonial. Her valley and fountain were near the southern gate of Rome.

266. **nympholepsy.** Literally, "rapture by a nymph". The Greeks supposed certain kinds of hallucination to be due to the influence of a passion for a nymph.

310. **Coliseum.** An immense building for gladiatorial contests built by three Flavian Emperors and hence called the Flavian Amphitheatre, later the Colosseum.

320. **Circus.** A place where Roman games and races were held. The largest of them, the Circus Maximus, was built by Julius Cæsar.

334. **Gladiator.** This statue of a mortally wounded athlete in the Capitoline Museum is now believed to represent a Gaul.

348. **Dacian mother.** Dacia was the Roman province now covered by Roumania. Its inhabitants, being warlike, were much used, when taken captive, as gladiators.

382. **the pilgrims.** This saying of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims is found in the writings of the Venerable Bede.

396. **Pantheon.** Meaning "the temple of all the gods".

406. **the mole which Hadrian rear'd on high.** The Mausoleum of the Emperor Hadrian, later a medieval fortress and now called the Castle of St. Angelo.

415. **the dome.** That of the cathedral of St. Peter.

418. **the Ephesian's miracle.** The temple of Diana at Ephesus, 343 feet in length, while that of St. Peter's is 613 feet.

421. **Sophia's bright roofs.** The former Christian church of St. Sophia, converted by the Turks into a mosque in 1453 when they captured Constantinople, has gilded roofs. Byron had seen both the "Ephesian miracle" and the former St. Sophia's during his journey of 1809.

427. **Zion's desolation.** The destruction of the city, and particularly the Temple, of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the armies of Titus.

479. **Laocoön's torture.** A group of statuary by three
(E.H.S.) E

Greek sculptors, which represents the struggle between Laocoon, a priest of Troy, and two serpents, from whose coils he tried to extricate his two young sons. The story is told by Virgil in the *Æneid*.

487. **the Lord of the unerring bow.** Apollo, here represented, in the statue called the Apollo Belvedere, in the attitude of shooting an arrow.

505. **Prometheus.** The Titan who pitied mankind and stole fire from the gods for their sake. The sculptor of the Apollo Belvedere is here regarded as repaying the debt by giving life to a god.

SHELLEY—THE SENSITIVE PLANT

21. **Naiad-like.** The Naiads were Greek goddesses of the waters, especially of rivers.

34. **Mænad.** Mænads were female followers of Bacchus and carried wands tipped with the pomegranate fruit.

54. **asphodels.** Lilies which, in Greek myth, were supposed to grow in Elysium. They were the peculiar plant of the dead.

72-73. There are several interpretations of these difficult lines. The closest connected with the context (i.e. with l. 77, which gives the key to the passage) and with Shelley's own language seems to be that of Rossetti: "Of that (viz., beauty) wherein none was wanting but itself, the Sensitive Plant had a love greater than any flower possessing beauty could impart or gratify; it loved more beauty than ever could belong to the giver."

163. **ephemeris.** The may-fly.

167. **antenatal tomb.** The chrysalis, from which the butterfly emerges at its birth.

199. **the spoil of the secret night.** The Lady's body underground.

236. **agarics.** A family of fungi which includes the mushroom.

261. **One choppy finger.** *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene iii:

Banquo. You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips.

Also, in l. 252, "forbid" is taken from the same scene in *Macbeth* and means "accurst".

KEATS—LAMIA

Part I

2. **Nymph and Satyr.** These Greek mythological figures of Nature, together with Oberon in the next line, who comes from Shakespeare, Dryads (tree-spirits) and Fauns (protectors of flocks) in l. 5, Tritons (sea-deities) in l. 15, and Silenus (the foster-father of Bacchus) in l. 103, come from either the Elizabethan Sandys' translation of Ovid or other Elizabethan reading of Keats.

7. **ever-smitten Hermes.** Son of Zeus and messenger of the gods. Was himself the god of learning, of arts and crafts and patron of travellers. "Ever-smitten" refers to his frequent love-affairs.

9. **Olympus.** A mountain in Thessaly, often cloud-covered and made the home of the gods in Greek myth.

36. **gentle heart.** A favourite sentiment and line in Chaucer is: "pity runneth soon in gentle heart".

46. **cirque-couchant.** Lying coiled up in circles.

47. **gordian.** The gordian knot fastened the pole to the yoke of the waggon of King Gordius of Phrygia. It was famed for the impossibility of untying it, and Alexander the Great cut it with his sword. Here the adjective suggested complicated coils into which the snake had wreathed itself.

49. **freckled like a pard.** Compare *As You Like It*, II, ii, 150: "bearded like the pard". "Pard" is the old word for a panther or leopard.

58. **Ariadne's tiar.** When Ariadne, daughter of Minos, King of Crete, had helped Theseus to slay the Minotaur and been deserted by him on the island of Naxos, Dionysus or Bacchus found her and married her, and set her among the heavens as a constellation of seven stars.

63. **Proserpine.** Daughter of Ceres, the goddess of fertility, was carried off by Pluto, god of the underworld, to be his queen. She remained very unwillingly, and was allowed to visit her home in Sicily for six months of every year.

74. **Apollo.** Son of Latona and god of the sun and of the higher arts of man. He was supreme in singing to the lyre, and also carried a bow and arrows ("bright Phoebian dart" of l. 78), which represents the sun's rays and wherewith he struck down his enemies.

81. **star of Lethe.** Hermes, so-called because it was his

duty to lead the souls of the dead to Hades, one of the river bounding which was Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.

115. **Circean.** Circe was an enchantress whom Ulysses met on his wanderings and from whose power he delivered many of his companions whom she had turned into swine.

133. **Caducean charm.** The caduceus was Hermes' staff entwined by two live serpents. With it he was able to heal or to cast spells or break them.

158. **brede.** Meaning here "embroidery". Was found by Keats in the poem "The Flower and the Leaf", then attributed to Chaucer, where it meant "breadth".

206. **Elysium.** That part of the Greek underworld reserved for heroes and the great after their death.

207, 208. **Nereids, Thetis.** Thetis was consort of Neptune god of the sea, and the Nereids her attendants.

212. **Mulciber.** Milton's name for Vulcan, the artificer-god.

244. **syllabing.** The use of this word as a verb is Miltonic.

248. **Orpheus-like.** Orpheus, the singer who could subdue wild beasts and move trees with his art, was able to bring back his wife Eurydice from the underworld after her death by winning permission from even the stony-hearted Pluto. He lost her, however, at the very exit from Hades by looking back at her, which Pluto had forbidden till they should both be back on earth. Milton alludes to the legend in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

265. **Pleiad.** One of the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione who were changed into stars after their death.

320. **The Adonian feast.** Adonis was the handsome huntsman beloved by Venus and mourned by her when he was slain by the wild boar which she had besought him not to hunt. His death was annually celebrated, generally by mourning, in Greece and Asia Minor.

333. **Pyrrha's pebbles.** In Greek myth, Deucalion and Pyrrha peopled the world again, after a flood had destroyed all mankind but themselves, by casting stones behind them which became men and women respectively. The conjunction of Pyrrha and Adam in the same line is in the Elizabethan tradition of pairing Greek and Biblical stories that resemble each other.

386. **Sounds Æolian.** Æolus was the Greek god of the winds, and his name was given to music which is caused by wind-blown instruments.

Part II

48. **My silver planet.** Recurring to Lycius's idea that Lamia is one of the Pleiades.

185. **libbard's paws.** An older spelling of "leopard's".

187. **Ceres' horn.** Ceres was a Roman goddess of agriculture, identified with the Greek Demeter. She bore a horn which poured out all the fruits of the earth and signified natural abundance.

226. **thyrsus.** A wand tipped with a fir-cone or a bunch of grapes, and partly enveloped by vine-leaves, carried by Dionysus and his followers in the Bacchic revels.

237. **unweave a rainbow.** A side-allusion to the reduction of the rainbow by Newton to the prismatic colours, thus apparently destroying its poetic value.

TENNYSON — THE PALACE OF ART

3. **I said, "O Soul, make merry".** Cf. Christ's parable of the rich fool in *Luke* xii, especially v. 19: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

15. **while Saturn whirls.** The chief sign in the poem of Tennyson's perennial interest in scientific research. Saturn is now known to have at least three rings.

61. **arras.** Wall-hangings in mediæval times, so-called because some of the original hangings were made at Arras in north-eastern France.

95. **sardonyx.** Meaning "onyx of Sardis", is a kind of onyx with alternating layers of light-coloured chalcedony and reddish cornelian or sard.

99. **St. Cecily.** Virgin and martyr of the Catholic Church of either the second or third century A.D. The patroness of music and supposed inventor of the organ. Her day is 22nd November.

102. **Houris.** Beautiful damsels whose companionship in paradise is promised to the Mohammedan after death. The very meaneast of the faithful will have seventy-two of them. They symbolize spiritual blessedness.

105. **mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son.** King Arthur of the Round Table legends.

107. **Avalon.** A fairy region to which Arthur was carried

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by a queen and many fair ladies and whence it was foretold he should return.

111. **the Ausonian king.** Numa. Ausonia was the old poetical name for Italy during its mythological period.

115. **Indian Cama.** Son of Brahma and the god of Love. In art he appears as a youth, accompanied by his wife Rati, who is Spring, and by a cuckoo and a bee, and preceded by refreshing breezes.

117. **Europa.** Daughter of Agemor, King of Phœnicia, carried off by Jupiter, who appeared to her in the form of a white bull.

121. **Ganymede.** Son of Tros, king of Troy, and the most beautiful of men. Carried off by Zeus's eagle to become the cup-bearer of the king of the gods.

126. **Caucasian mind.** The mind of the Indo-European group of races, which include the Greek, English, Persian and North Indian.

137. **The Ionian father.** Homer.

163. **Verulam.** Sir Francis Bacon, one of whose titles was Baron Verulam. The epithet "large-brow'd" was suggested to Tennyson by a bust of Bacon by Nollekens in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

164. **The first of those who know.** Meant to apply to both Plato and Bacon. Tennyson had originally written:

"Bold Luther, large-browed Verulam,
The king of those who know",

and added the note:—"Il maestro di color chi sanno", Dante, *Inf.* iii.

171. **Memnon.** Son of Aurora and Tithonus. When fighting for the Trojans, he killed Nestor's son, Antilochus, and was himself killed by Achilles. A colossal statue of King Amenophis in Egypt was called Memnon by the Greeks; it was supposed to give forth a musical sound at dawn, Aurora meaning "dawn".

210. **Like Herod.** The story of Herod's death here alluded to is given in *The Acts of the Apostles*, xii, 20-23.

227. **Wrote "Mene, mene".** A reference to the story in *Daniel*, v, of the writing on the wall of King Belshazzar's palace—Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin—interpreted by Daniel to mean that Belshazzar's kingdom had been numbered and finished, that the king had been weighed and found wanting, and that his kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

TENNYSON — THE LOTOS-EATERS

11. **Slow-dropping veils.** Tennyson took this image from the appearance of the high waterfall of the Cirque of Gavarnie in the French Pyrenees, which he had recently seen.

23. **galingale.** A kind of sedge. Chaucer mentions it in his Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.

133. **amaranth and moly.** Amaranth in Greek means "unwithering", and was the name given in poetry to certain very slow-fading plants. Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, iii, 353, speaks of "Immortal amaranth, a flower which once in Paradise, fast by the tree of life, Began to bloom". Moly is described in Homer, *Odyssey*, x, 302-306, as a strange medicinal plant given to Ulysses by Hermes to protect him against the machinations of Circe.

142. **acanthus-wreath.** The acanthus is a genus of plants of which one was used by the Greeks for a model for artistic decoration in metal and stone. It is here spoken of as in its natural state.

156. **nectar.** This and ambrosia were the food and drink of the Greek gods, according to Homer. They are both supposed to be forms of honey.

BROWNING — PIPPA PASSES

Introduction

Trevisan. The district round the town of Treviso.

12. **bounds.** "Leaps", the light overflowing in quickly successive waves.

42. Here the scheme of the poem—Morning, Noon, Evening, Night—is outlined.

73ff. The sunbeam, caught at the bottom of the basin by the first splash from the ewer, is reflected in rippling waves on the ceiling, and passes, either directly or by reflection, to the flower.

88. **martagon.** A Romance word meaning a Turk, from the Arabic "martagan", which was a special form of turban adopted by Sultan Mohammed the First, and thence applied to this particular lily.

148ff. "save" and "keep" are 3rd pers. imperatives with subjects "brow" and "foot", like the construction of l. 150.

156. **not envy, this!** i.e. not envy of a husband's love.

190ff. The New Year's Hymn. God's love and will and power have combined to make His creatures. As once He filled Paradise, so now He fills earth. Each human being is filled with just the *power* for the work which His *love* appoints and His *will* directs. Hence, *small* and *great* events alike show Him forth, and among His creatures "there is no last and first". In no deed of life is there want or waste of God's power.

Conclusion

2. **dray.** A dialect word for a squirrel's nest. Here used for that of a mouse.

7. **my Zanze.** This was the girl particularly appointed to lead the plot to seduce Pippa.

25. **old Luca.** The owner of the silk-mills where Pippa works. Unknown to her, he has been murdered the night before.

88. **mavis.** The song-thrush.

94. **complines.** The seventh and last service in the Catholic day, celebrated at 9 p.m. (Lat. *completa hora*).

96. **twats.** "Erroneously used by Browning (perhaps from a poem of 1660, entitled, *Vanity of Vanities*), under the impression that it denoted some part of a man's attire." (*Oxford New English Dictionary*.)

